

### Amendments to the Claims

1 Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of handling time-sensitive messages, comprising steps of:  
2 marking a message, by a creator thereof, as time-sensitive;  
3 sending the marked message from a computing device of the creator to a computing  
4 device of a recipient for whom the message was created, such that after the marked message is  
5 received at the computing device of the recipient, it will be processed by:  
6 determining that the marked message is marked as being time-sensitive and that a  
7 time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded;  
8 determining whether a hierarchy of recipient notification techniques has been  
9 defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if so, performing steps of:  
10 determining an applicable one of the various intervals that corresponds to a  
11 current time;  
12 selecting one of the recipient notification techniques which corresponds to  
13 the determined one of the various intervals; and  
14 notifying the recipient of the marked message using the selected recipient  
15 notification technique; and  
16 ~~automatically be rendered~~ rendering the marked message to the recipient using an  
17 application adapted for processing the message within a time period of the time-sensitivity; [.]  
18 and  
19 preventing the recipient ~~will be prevented~~ from performing other actions with the  
20 application until the recipient provides a response to the message; ~~within a time period of the~~  
21 time-sensitivity; and

22 automatically receiving a reply from the recipient, sent from the computing device of the  
23 recipient to the computing device of the creator following the recipient's response thereto.

1 Claim 2 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the marking step further  
2 comprises indicating, by the creator, that snoozing is allowed by the recipient for this message,  
3 such that the recipient will be allowed to temporarily delay the response to the rendered message  
4 for a time that remains within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

1 Claim 3 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the marking step  
2 further comprises indicating, by the creator, an ending time for the time period of the time-  
3 sensitivity of the message.

1 Claim 4 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 3, wherein the marking step  
2 further comprises indicating, by the creator, a starting time for the time period of the time-  
3 sensitivity of the message.

1 Claim 5 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
2 receiving the marked message at the computing device of the recipient;  
3 determining, at the computing device of the recipient, whether the time period of the time-  
4 sensitivity of the received message has been reached; and  
5 if so, automatically rendering the received message, at the computing device of the  
6 recipient, to the recipient in the application within the time period of the time-sensitivity, and

7 preventing the recipient from performing other actions with the application; ~~within the time period~~  
8 ~~of the time-sensitivity if so.~~

Claim 6 (canceled)

1 Claim 7 (current amended): A method of improving electronic communications, comprising steps  
2 of:

3 receiving a plurality of electronic messages at a computing device of a recipient to whom  
4 the electronic messages are addressed; and

5 ~~evaluating, at the computing device, the received electronic messages for processing;~~  
6 ~~further comprising steps of:~~

7 determining whether a selected one of the received electronic messages is marked as being  
8 time-sensitive; and

9 if the determining step has a positive result and a time period of the time-sensitivity has  
10 been reached but not exceeded, processing the selected one, further comprising steps of:

11 determining whether a hierarchy of recipient notification techniques has been  
12 defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if so, performing steps of:

13 determining an applicable one of the various intervals that corresponds to a  
14 current time;

15 selecting one of the recipient notification techniques which corresponds to  
16 the determined one of the various intervals; and

17 notifying the recipient of the selected one using the selected recipient

18 notification technique;

19 automatically rendering the selected one to the recipient in an application adapted  
20 for processing the selected one within the time period of the time-sensitivity[[,]]; and

21 preventing the recipient from performing other actions with the application until  
22 the recipient provides a response to the selected one within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

Claim 8 (canceled)

1 Claim 9 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the processing step  
2 further comprising comprises the steps of:

3 determining, ~~when the selected one is marked as being time-sensitive and the time period~~  
4 ~~of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded~~; whether snoozing is allowed for the  
5 selected one; and

6 if so, allowing the recipient to delay the response to the selected one until a later time,  
7 wherein the later time remains within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

1 Claim 10 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the ~~evaluating~~  
2 processing step further comprises the [[step]] steps of:

3 determining, ~~when the selected one is marked as being time-sensitive and the time period~~  
4 ~~of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded~~; whether snoozing is allowed for the  
5 selected one; and

6 if so, ~~allowing the recipient to suppress~~ suppressing the preventing step only while (1) a

starting time of the time period has been reached and (2) an ending time of the time period has not been reached.

Claim 11 (previously presented): The method according to Claim 7, further comprising the step of:

sending a notification of the response to a computing device of a creator of the rendered selected one.

Claim 12 (original): The method according to Claim 7, further comprising the step of determining whether processing of the rendered selected one is complete, and if not, remembering the rendered selected one for subsequent evaluation at a later time, wherein the later time is within the time period of the time-sensitivity.

Claim 13 (canceled)

Claim 14 (original): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the electronic messages are e-mail messages.

Claim 15 (original): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the electronic messages are electronic calendar events.

Claim 16 (original): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the electronic messages are to-do

2 items.

Claim 17 (canceled)

1 Claim 18 (currently amended): A system for handling time-sensitive messages, comprising:

2 means for marking a message, by a creator thereof, as time-sensitive;

3 means for sending the marked message from a computing device of the creator to a  
4 computing device of a recipient for whom the message was created, such that after the marked  
5 message is received at the computing device of the recipient, it will be processed by:

6 determining that the marked message is marked as being time-sensitive and that a  
7 time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded;

8 determining whether a hierarchy of recipient notification techniques has been  
9 defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if so, performing steps of:

10 determining an applicable one of the various intervals that corresponds to a  
11 current time;

12 selecting one of the recipient notification techniques which corresponds to  
13 the determined one of the various intervals; and

14 notifying the recipient of the marked message using the selected recipient  
15 notification technique; and

16 automatically ~~be rendered~~ rendering the marked message to the recipient using an  
17 application adapted for processing the message within a time period of the time-sensitivity; [.,]  
18 and

19 preventing the recipient ~~will be prevented~~ from performing other actions with the  
20 application until the recipient provides a response to the message; ~~within a time period of the~~  
21 ~~time-sensitivity~~; and

22 means for automatically receiving a reply from the recipient, sent from the computing  
23 device of the recipient to the computing device of the creator following the recipient's response.

1 Claim 19 (previously presented): The system according to Claim 18, wherein the marking means  
2 further comprises means for indicating, by the creator, an ending time for the time period of the  
3 time-sensitivity of the message.

1 Claim 20 (currently amended): A system for improving electronic communications, comprising:  
2 means for receiving a plurality of electronic messages at a computing device of a recipient  
3 to whom the electronic messages are addressed;

4 means for determining, at the computing device, whether a selected one of the received  
5 electronic messages is marked as being time-sensitive[.]; and

6 means for processing the selected one if the means for determining has a positive result  
7 and if so, whether a time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded[.];  
8 further comprising:

9 means for determining whether a hierarchy of recipient notification techniques has  
10 been defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if so, means for using the hierarchy  
11 by:

12 determining an applicable one of the various intervals that corresponds to a

current time;  
selecting one of the recipient notification techniques which corresponds to  
the determined one of the various intervals; and  
notifying the recipient of the selected one using the selected recipient  
notification technique; [[and]]  
means for automatically rendering the selected one to the recipient in an  
application adapted for processing the selected one within the time period of the time-  
sensitivity[[,]]; and  
means for preventing the recipient from performing other actions with the  
application until the recipient provides a response to the selected one within the time period of the  
time-sensitivity; ~~if so~~.

Claim 21 (canceled)

Claim 22 (currently amended): A computer program product for handling time-sensitive  
messages, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable media and  
comprising:

computer-readable program code for marking a message, by a creator thereof, as time-  
sensitive;

computer-readable program code for sending the marked message from a computing  
device of the creator to a computing device of a recipient for whom the message was created,  
such that after the marked message is received at the computing device of the recipient, it will be



processed by:

determining that the marked message is marked as being time-sensitive and that a time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded;

determining whether a hierarchy of recipient notification techniques has been defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if so, performing steps of:

determining an applicable one of the various intervals that corresponds to a current time;

selecting one of the recipient notification techniques which corresponds to the determined one of the various intervals; and

notifying the recipient of the marked message using the selected recipient notification technique; and

~~automatically be rendered~~ rendering the marked message to the recipient using an application adapted for processing the message within a time period of the time-sensitivity;[.]]

and

preventing the recipient ~~will be prevented~~ from performing other actions with the application until the recipient provides a response to the message; ~~within a time period of the time-sensitivity~~; and

computer-readable program code for automatically receiving a reply from the recipient, sent from the computing device of the recipient to the computing device of the creator following the recipient's response thereto.

Claim 23 (previously presented): The computer program product according to Claim 22, wherein

2 the computer-readable program code for marking further comprises computer-readable program  
3 code for indicating, by the creator, an ending time for the time period of the time-sensitivity of the  
4 message.

1 Claim 24 (currently amended): A computer program product for improving electronic  
2 communications, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable  
3 media and comprising:

4 computer-readable program code for receiving a plurality of electronic messages at a  
5 computing device of a recipient to whom the electronic messages are addressed;

6 computer-readable program code for determining, at the computing device, whether a  
7 selected one of the received electronic messages is marked as being time-sensitive, and if so,  
8 whether a time period of the time-sensitivity has been reached but not exceeded; and

9 computer-readable program code for processing the selected one when the computer-  
10 readable program code has a positive result, further comprising computer-readable program code  
11 for:

12 determining whether a hierarchy of recipient notification techniques has been  
13 defined for various intervals of the time-sensitivity, and if so, performing steps of:

14 determining an applicable one of the various intervals that corresponds to a  
15 current time;

16 selecting one of the recipient notification techniques which corresponds to  
17 the determined one of the various intervals; and

18 notifying the recipient of the selected one using the selected recipient

19 notification technique; [[and]]

20 computer-readable program code for automatically rendering the selected one to  
21 the recipient in an application adapted for processing the selected one within the time period of  
22 the time-sensitivity[[,]]; and

23 computer-readable program code for preventing the recipient from performing  
24 other actions with the application until the recipient provides a response to the selected one within  
25 the time period of the time-sensitivity; ~~if so~~.

Claim 25 (canceled)

1 Claim 26 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 7, wherein the ~~requiring~~  
2 automatically rendering step further comprises the steps of:

3 automatically starting execution of an application for rendering the selected one, at the  
4 computing device of the recipient, if the execution of the application is not currently started;

5 automatically bringing a window rendered by the application to a foreground of a display  
6 of the computing device and making the window active;

7 automatically rendering the selected one in the active window; and

8 requiring the recipient to take action with the selected one before performing any other  
9 tasks with the application.